Arthur E. Hunt - Dijon France 1919

Reflections

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My granduncle Arthur E. Hunt. We never met, but he sent me several letters when I was young, and for my high school graduation he sent me two rings. I think I still have them. Looking through this now, I am almost without words.

More than a thousand pages of family photographs, letters and documents recently came to me from family in Iowa. They belonged to my grandfather Hunt's family. My grandfather left Iowa during the Depression and came to the Northwest looking for work. Among all those family papers was this small notebook kept by his brother Arthur during the First World War.

Arthur E. Hunt served in France from May 1918 to May 1919. His surviving wartime notebook places him within the network of American units operating in eastern France during the final campaigns of World War I. Entries from August 1918 correspond closely with the 82nd Division's movement into the Marbache sector near Toul, immediately before the St. Mihiel Offensive of September 12–16, 1918. Later notes reference units, hospitals and transportation associated with the movement toward the Meuse-Argonne front, where the 82nd Division entered heavy fighting in October.

This portrait was taken in Dijon, France, on February 5, 1919, 26 years of age, several months after the Armistice. Arthur's notebook—part travel record, military directory and personal memorandum—contains locations, dates, units, hospitals, transportation information, names and occasional personal thoughts. It offers numerous clues that may eventually allow his wartime movements to be reconstructed in much greater detail.

For now, though, there is something extraordinary about simply opening this little notebook more than a century later and following Arthur across France, page by page.